

Office Space

Designing for Creative Collaboration

by Megan Mazzocco, associate editor
Adapted from & reprinted with permission: John Wiley & Sons;
Scott Doorley, Scott Witthoft, *Make Space*

Unlike the chronically dysfunctional workplace in the cult classic, *Office Space*, office workers require more than a red stapler for a well-rounded working environment. And as space per worker is on decline, it is even more important to make that space count. Adapted from the book, *Make Space: How to Set the Stage for Creative Collaboration*, by Scott Doorley and Scott Witthoft, and courtesy of Wiley Publishing, the following primer is a refreshing 'how to' for successful office design.

d.school

Experimental, Experiential Work Lab

According to David Kelley, founder of design practice IDEO, and the author of the book's foreword, people feel and internalize what a space tells them about how to work. "Collaboration and creation aren't bound to a singular space, they flow throughout a space," says Kelley. "Space is an instrument... a tool that can help create deep and meaningful collaborations in your work and life." The volume of work, innovation and ideas depends on each and every inch of the physical space, and how players, team members and collaborators can interact within that space is paramount to a successful working environment.

How to create an exceptional working environment in limited space became somewhat of an experiment within a design lab of sorts at the Hasso Plattner Institute for Design, a Stanford classroom that began in a double-wide trailer and relocated every 12 months. Each time the classroom relocated, they experimented with different formulas for working based on 'space studies' and devised 'design templates' for 'situations' and 'tools' to facilitate them. Known by its faculty and the authors of this book as the d.school, the five-year experiment precipitated some very simple and concise design insights that prove extremely valuable in space planning. "Space is the body language of an organization," says Chris Fink of the d.school and IDEO.



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Design Templates

The form, functionality and finish of a space reflect the culture, behaviors and priorities of the people within it. This suggests that a space designer is simultaneously a "people designer," in that he or she is a cultural translator and a builder. That said, space design has its own vocabulary but also a very specific grammar that can be tweaked to bolster desirable habits.

Understanding a design template is like being equipped with the components of a modular closet organizer. Once you know how to mount them, they can be rearranged to suit the needs of the user. The Design Template uses specific categories: "Places" and "Properties" address the divisions in a space and the features within them; while "Actions" and "Attitudes" describe who is in the space and what they do. With these four categories one can build dexterity and flexibility into the process of creating new spaces and cultivating collaboration within an organization.

Definitions:

Places: Broad spatial types that share an overall purpose. For instance, all spaces include thresholds, such as doorways or openings, and transitions, such as hallways.

Properties: The specific aspects of people or space that can be enhanced or altered to impact behavior. For instance, posture can be drastically altered depending on seating choices. Ambience attributes, such as lighting, can be used to adjust mood.

Actions: Behaviors and tasks. For instance, "creatives" tend to visually saturate work spaces with project inspiration and artifacts.

Attitudes: Cultural values and habits. "Bias toward Action" is a core value at the d.school.



The Peanut Gallery

If the workplace is interesting and attracts observers, the reality show audience doesn't have to be disruptive. The Peanut Gallery design delineates the crowd from the workers and facilitates their coming and going without disrupting work; it also allows the workers and the observers to engage in a dialogue if so desired.

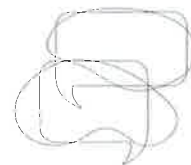
Template: The Peanut Gallery

Many situations present themselves throughout a design program, but articulating them can be tricky. Here is an example of one situation: "The Peanut Gallery" and how to treat it with a situational design template.

Definition: A peanut gallery is a space where spectators can drop in and out without disturbing people involved in another activity. If the space you design or the work that is being performed in the space lend themselves to attracting visitors, the design should anticipate the needs of callers who would like to peek in on 'a reality show' while preserving the integrity of the experience for the people performing the work.

As such, an effective peanut gallery provides strong visual delineation that can be broken on occasion. A railing or long bar-style surface is recommended for this, as it provides a strong line that separates participants from spectators, but still allows the parties to engage in a dialogue if desired. A glass wall provides a more solid delineation, but is less adaptable to conversation. Furthermore, it allows bodies to come and go quietly: items such as tall stools facilitate standing and sitting with little commotion. If space or budget don't allow for additional tables and partitions, try keeping several tall stools along a wall adjacent to a high-visibility work area, or in a transitional zone near a back entrance.

"Space is an instrument ... a tool that can help create deep and meaningful collaborations in your work and life."



Template: The Cul-de-Sac

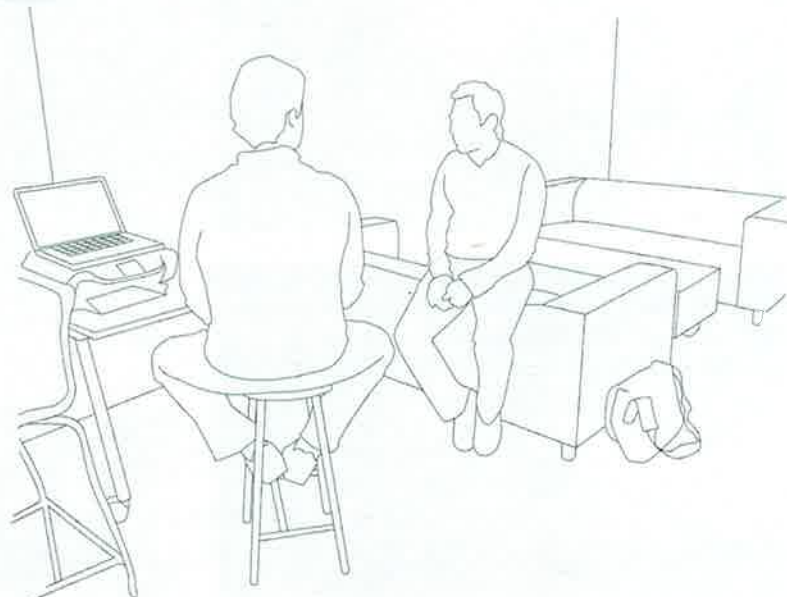
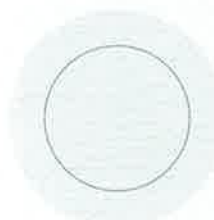
Definition: The nuance of a cul-de-sac is a spot at which to chat and linger before or after a gathering.

I grew up in a cul-de-sac, so I was rather intrigued to find out they are not only in housing communities but also in workplaces—well, in a metaphorical way. People love to strike up conversations at thresholds—on their ways in and out of spaces. Create a pause zone where conversations, "impromptu conferences" or "protracted good-byes" (quote from *From Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* by William H. Whyte) can transpire and take advantage of the spontaneity of those spaces.

Successful cul-de-sacs may consist of the arm or the back of a sofa or chair near an open space in or near the flow of traffic combined with an object of attraction that can be engaged and released with little or no effort. For starters, try placing a cul-de-sac near a threshold or transitional boundary. Variations based on the culture of an organization may lend itself to include a small perch, like the edge of a sofa, or a more deliberate furniture grouping, such as a high-top table and bar stools.

The Cul-de-Sac

A metaphorical cul-de-sac is a spot at which to chat and linger before or after a gathering. A grouping of furniture near a transitional space can serve as a cul-de-sac.



PRODUCTS



Memor

Inspired by past designs of the Memo Furniture Brand, this collection from Coallesse combines sturdy and sleek for a compact seating option that works in live/work environments. Its professional look, discreet border areas and open-throughs, creating comfortable zones to encourage spontaneous interaction. The seating ensemble provides an attractive modular solution for multiple space configurations. Visit www.coallesse.com or Circle 511

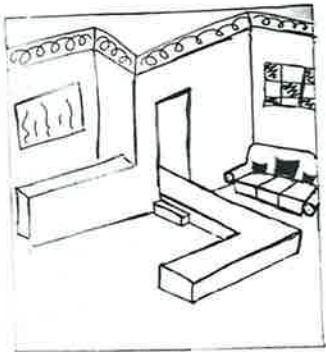
Template: Huddle Rooms

Definition: A convenient drop-in space for team collaboration.

A creative mix of huddle rooms supports areas that foster flare of creative-minded teams and others that foster focusing; if space is at a premium, equip the spaces with tools to support both types of working groups. Huddle rooms are first-come, first-served spaces located near open areas or walkways where people may be inclined to drop in. Keep them in sight, but slightly and selectively obscured; for instance, frosted, eye-level glass—also a safety measure that prevents people from running into glass walled spaces.

For more flare, the book suggests dynamic elements be added to the environment, such as informal furniture that may be rearranged, leaned upon or walked around. Also be sure to include writable surfaces everywhere and a musical element such as an iPod station.

Focusing stations need soft surroundings, such as comfortable furniture and multiple light sources. The authors advise including more visual privacy such as semi-opaque materials that reveal motion and color without details. Cutouts and port holes may allow for peeking without direct engagement or interruption.



Huddle Rooms

A convenient drop-in space for team collaboration, huddle rooms are first-come first-served nooks tucked in near common areas or open spaces to encourage spontaneity and interaction. Spaces can be equipped to lend themselves to *flare* or *focus*.



Keep them in sight, but slightly and selectively obscured; for instance, frost eye-level glass—also a safety measure that prevents people from running into glass walled spaces.



Affordable Design

Móz Designs ETA series of easy-to-assemble metal products can be installed on site, right out of the box, and are a cost-effective alternative for hospitality, retail and commercial spaces. Includes column covers, room dividers, wall panels and table tops in a variety of colors and finishes. ETC products are pre-engineered and shipped with mounting components and instructions. Made from 80% post-industrial recycled aluminum, gloss or satin finishes can be specified along with extra-durable high-traffic finish options. Visit www.mozdesigns.com or Circle 509

PRODUCTS

Off The Wall

"Flex walls are changing the way people look at, acquire and organize space," says KI's Shawn Green. The company's genius movable walls offer attractive modular solutions for any commercial interior. The movable walls reconfigure as space needs change, tenants move and aesthetics evolve. Visit www.ki.com or Circle 510



Vision In Glass

Office Drawing offers its DVision modular glass walls that engage office interiors in a division of space with equal opportunity for natural daylight and views. The modular solutions offer elegant aesthetics with Italian design and detailing. Visit <http://officedrawing.com> or Circle 508



Tools & Products for Success: Writable Surfaces Everywhere

The authors of *Make Space* suggest writable surfaces everywhere as an opportunity to capture serendipitous ideas, brainstorm or conversations before they slip into oblivion. "Dry-erase surfaces support instantaneous innovation," they say. Idea Paint Pro is a very useful product to make this happen as it can transform a flat surface into a dry-erase board. The alternative is to install dry-erase boards everywhere; dry-erase surfaces can include transparent and translucent acrylic, polycarbonate, showerboard, painted steel and glass. For polycarbonate and acrylic, Port Plastics (www.portplastics.com) and TAP Plastics (www.tapplastics.com) are western regional sources. Showerboard is available at most home superstores and local lumber suppliers. Eliason has just come out with a dry-erase-panel door, if you want to catch ideas coming and going.



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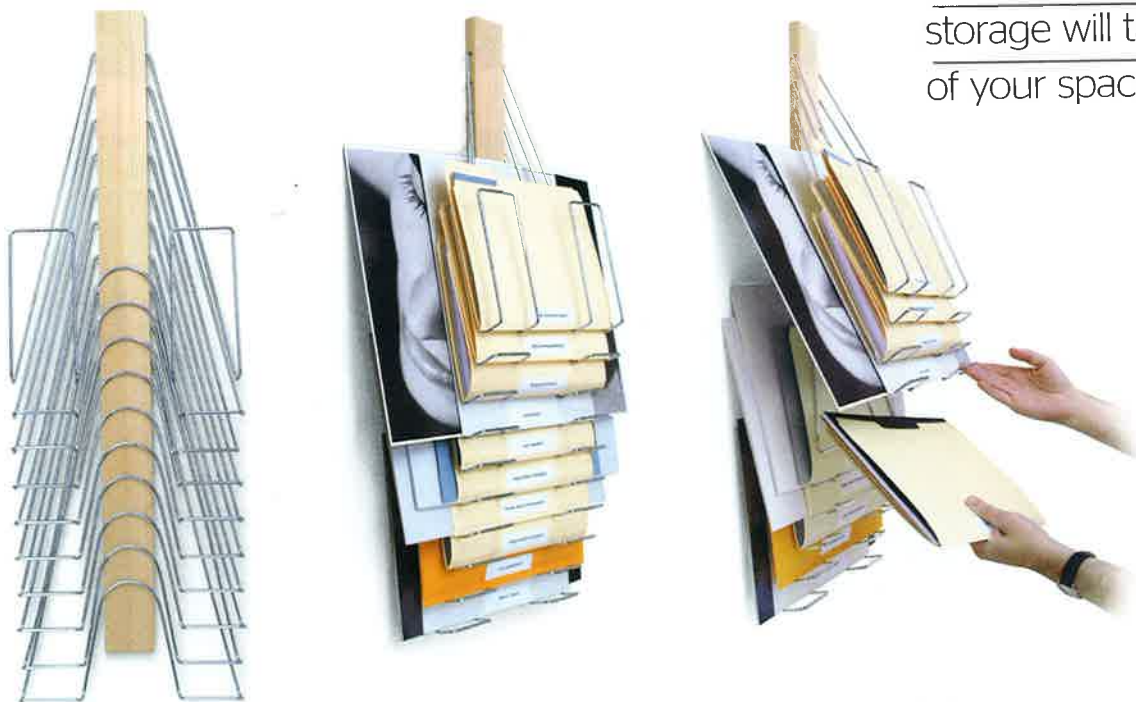


PRODUCT

Interesting Paint

Now watching paint dry leads to more interesting things—after a four-day cure time, IdeaPaint PRO from **MDC Wallcovering** transforms any surface into a canvas for creativity. Applied to a smooth surface, the odorless and easy to install dry-erase paint offers a high-performance, dry-erase canvas that erases cleanly. Available in white, white sand, light beige and light gray. Visit www.mdcwall.com or Circle 507





Westerville's Premium storage rack

"Whether you design for it or not, storage will take up at least 30% of your space."

AVG. DESIGNATED OFFICE SPACE PER WORKER OVER TIME

YEAR:	SPACE
2010:	225 sq. ft.
2012:	176 sq. ft.
2017:	151 sq. ft.

The Incredible Shrinking Office

We all know that Americans are not getting smaller, but their office spaces will be. According to recent data released by CoreNet Global, the worldwide association for corporate real estate and workplace professionals, the average designated office space per worker in 2010 was 225 sq. ft., already on the decline, that number today is approximately 176 sq. ft. and will reach an average of 151 sq. ft. per worker by 2017.

In many European workplaces, 100 sq. ft. per individual is already the norm and that trend is headed toward North America, as 40% of the survey's respondents said that they plan to reduce individual office space to 100 sq. ft. or less by 2017. The survey conducted in February 2012, included more than 465 global managers of corporate real estate.

The association observes common areas and shared spaces becoming a workplace priority. "The main reason for the declines," says Richard Kadzis, CoreNet Global's vice president of strategic communications, "is the huge increase in collaborative and team-oriented space inside a growing number of companies that are stressing 'smaller but smarter' workplaces against the backdrop of continuing economic uncertainty and cost containment."

A number of additional factors are contributing to this all-time low benchmark of individual space allocation. "More companies are adopting open floor plans in which employees do not have a permanently designated space at all; rather they use unassigned space when they are in the office, settings that often change daily," says Kadzis. "This trend is enabled by technology and by cost measures, as they require smaller footprints." In fact, CoreNet Global reduced its total office space and space per person by nearly 20% during last year's renovation of its downtown Atlanta headquarters.

Tools & Products for Success: Storage

Storage should be at least 30% of your space, advise the Scotts, especially for creative professionals. The list spans personal items, inspirational objects, archives and references. To ensure that storage is treated as a living entity and is not stagnant, put things in visible areas and in transparent containers so that artifacts of inspiration and concepts do not get lost in a dark corner. Consider local off-site storage for seasonal-use items.

PRODUCTS

Wall Papers

A great way to stay organized is storage, but what if you need to see everything you're working with—little-bits and corners of each, like working on your computer desktop? Enter **Westerville's Premium storage rack**. The Universal Vertical Filing Rack system for storing flat content like drawings, art, documents, photos and magazines, allows all files to remain visible and at your finger tips regardless of size differences. It also frees up valuable workspace by putting those items on the wall and out of your way. Visit www.westervilledesign.com or Circle 506



Automated Library

Kardex Remstar offers automated storage and retrieval systems for manufacturing, distribution, warehousing, offices and institutions. The company's website has been revised with an updated design, and it's easy to navigate and provides visitors with current information on the storage and retrieval solutions offered by Kardex Remstar. Visit www.kardexremstar.com or Circle 505

Smart Secret

The mark of a truly functional design is integration. **SMARTdesks** embody the form and function needed to support technology-driven environments. The company's signature "flipIT" rotates a widescreen monitor into a semi-recessed position for unobstructed sight lines for presentations. The Department of State recently renovated its high-traffic conference room with this table from SMARTdesks; the table allows users to work with or without a computer, and always without interference from electrical supply cords and network cables. Visit www.smartdesks.com or Circle 504



Active storage and work space in the metal shop of Lick-Wilmerding High School

